# Big Bar Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

PALS 56140, (revised 05/29/2020)

## Proposed Project Background, Description, and Purpose

The Big Bar Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project, PALS 56140 was signed on August 28, 2019. The project authorizes salvage harvest of approximately 736 acres of dead and dying trees using conventional or mechanical tractor logging practices. The project also authorizes reforestation and maintenance activities to include: site preparation which can include biomassing, hand-cutting, hand- or grapple-piling and pile burning; planting; grubbing after planting; and a variety of maintenance activities including mastication, hand-cut and hand- or grapple-pile, pile burning, prescribed fire, and targeted grazing. It also authorizes road improvements such as adding or improving drainage structures and use of herbicides along with mechanical treatments to control, eradicate, and prevent the spread of non-native invasive plants.

We propose to authorize two additional activities 1) the use of herbicide treatments as a method to perform site prep and maintenance as needed for reforestation; and 2) develop pullouts and roadside parking to facilitate dispersed recreation, scenic, and safety opportunities.

Herbicides would be applied in accordance with: 1) product label directions; 2) California Department of Pesticide Regulation requirements; 3) Forest Service best management practices for water quality (USDA Forest Service 2011); and 4) Forest Service direction (FSM 2900, 2150 and 2200) and handbook (FSH 2109.14). This project will include a Pesticide Use Spill Plan. Prior to any herbicide use, a Pesticide Use Proposal (PUP) (FS-2100-2) and safety plan (FS-6700-7) will be completed by the project leader and approved by the Responsible Official. These documents will be included in the project record.

Specific design features, best management practices, and mitigation measures are summarized in the Appendix B – General Herbicide Use Design Features.

Developed pullouts and roadside parking would be placed where hazard tree removal and disposal has opened up space, blasting is not needed, permanent structures on outside edges (gabions or welded wire compacted fill) are not needed. Spaces will be approximately 300 feet by 300 feet, consist of 6 inches of compacted aggregate base, and be developed with appropriate drainage structures to stormproof surfaces.

When Assistant Regional Silviculturist, Ramiro Rojas visited the Camp Fire in September 2019, he wrote a report that reforestation efforts would fail if herbicide treatments were not available for maintenance and in some cases site prep. Based on time constraints it was decided to include any opportunities of dispersed recreation development into the future French Creek I and French Creek II vegetation management projects. These projects have been pushed back by the COVID-19 emergency, and the opportunity to provide these opportunities is available at this time.

## Collaborative Involvement

November 29, 2018, members of the interdisciplinary team (IDT) attended the reforestation symposium: establishing resilient forests for California's future held by the USDA Climate Hub, Forest Service, Cal Fire, UCANR, and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The event provided a

forum where scientists (researchers) and managers could share results, advancements, and experiences related to reforestation to help frame important future forest management actions.

February 12, 2019, 27 representatives of federal and local government, environmental organizations, industry, and the Forest Service participated in a field trip of the FRRD Collaborative to tour National Forest System lands in the Camp Fire area. At the evening Collaborative meeting the group had a conversation regarding the Camp Fire and what that meant for future projects on the FRRD, including discussion of the necessity to maintain any reforestation work and to control shrubs and the appropriateness of herbicides. There was a lengthy discussion of the role of herbicides as a tool and practical questions about when and where it should be used.

On May 9, 2019, 10 representatives of local government, environmental organizations, industry, and the Forest Service visited the project area as part of a larger field trip of the FRRD Collaborative to tour National Forest System lands in the Camp Fire area. The project was introduced at the field trip site and later that evening at the quarterly meeting of the FRRD Collaborative. On the field trip it was requested that during project layout we will look for areas (landings, road maintenance, areas of 100% tree mortality) with the potential for development of pullouts and roadside parking to facilitate dispersed recreation opportunities.

The Butte County Forest Advisory Committee was briefed on the project May 20, 2019 at their monthly meeting.

The FRRD interdisciplinary team (IDT) met May 29, 2019, along with collaborators to approve a project area and propose stand-by-stand prescriptions.

The project was entered into PALS and appeared on the Plumas National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA), May 31, 2019, as well as the Feather River Ranger District 10 year Strategic Plan and Forest Program of Work (POW). On May 31, 2019, we sent a project description and invitation for scoping to 92 representatives of Federal, Tribal, State, and local governments, non-government organizations, industry, education, utilities, and members of the public.

These additional activities are anticipated to have a decision in June, 2020. Please provide any comments to Eric J. Murphy, ejmurphy@usda.gov or Clay R. Davis, clay.davis@usda.gov